Flinders
UNIVERSITY

2009-0200.R1
Novice teachers' work: Constructing 'different' children
Susan Krieg

First/Contact Author:

Name	Susan Krieg
Title	Doctor
Institution	Flinders University
Phone	088201 2312
Email	Susan.krieg@flinders.edu.au
Postal address	School of Education Flinders University PO Box 2100 Adelaide South Australia 5000

Author Biography (30 words)

Susan is a senior lecturer in the Flinders University School of Education. She has responsibility for the development and implementation of an innovative new early childhood (Birth -8) degree. Susan's research is concerned with teacher education, early childhood education curriculum and pedagogy, equity and social justice.

Acknowledgements *(Optional)*

Novice teachers' work: Constructing 'different' children?

Abstract

Developing a teacher identity is an ongoing and multifaceted process. In part, the process involves finding a voice amid the clamour of other, often contradictory voices and complex conditions in which teachers find themselves. Drawing from a larger study of teacher professional identities this paper explores how two beginning early childhood educators talk about what it means to teach. The paper focuses on how these novice teachers position themselves, and are positioned, by their understandings of the 'child'. This focus on children is particularly relevant to understanding teacher identities for in educational contexts, teachers and children are inextricably linked, they are part of a relational pair. Using critical discourse analysis as a way of examining interview data, I discuss how a discourse of the 'normal' child, constructs particular identity positions for children and the adults who work with them.

Key words: Professional identities, early childhood educator, normalcy, social construction of childhood

Introduction

Drawing from a larger study of teacher professional identities, in this paper I examine how two novice early childhood educators use the lens of 'normalcy' to discuss their work with children. The paper utilises Foucault's (1986) theorisation to examine how the grids of specification created by child development theory have become the dominant way of thinking about young children. These grids form the basis for differentiating between normal children and the 'others'. Foucault argues that using a

concept of 'normal' establishes categories of people, the boundaries between these categories, and clearly defines the people who do 'not fit' within the boundaries (p.184). Foucault contends that the productive power of normalisation is evident in the way it not only establishes totalisation of whole groups of people into specified categories but also encourages individualisation with its emphasis on defining the characteristics of the individual 'deviant'. This paper presents a study of this normalisation process through an analysis of two novice teachers talking about their work.

The variations in the ways that the concept of normalcy is played out in educational settings are multiple. However, in many contemporary educational institutions definitions of what constitutes 'normality' are being refined in unprecedented ways. Baker (1998) contends that:

> The developmentalist order of childhood is being extended…new kinds of children are being produced through new categories for assessment. Categories such as: 'ready to learn', 'at risk', 'attention deficit disorder' suggest the limits of a normal childhood at the end of the twentieth century (p.139).

In this paper I examine some of the limits and 'boundaries' that are created by contemporary versions of the 'normal' child. I use Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the relationship between the versions of the child that were made available to two novice teachers in their experience of teacher education and how these versions of young children construct their ideas about what it means to be a teacher.

The awareness that there are different versions of childhood and that these versions

are related to the cultural, political and economic forces operating at particular times

and places contributes to a realisation that childhood is 'socially constructed'

(Christensen & James, 2000; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; James & Prout, 1997).

Within this frame it is recognised that 'what counts' as childhood has varied both

historically and between cultural groups (Christensen & James, 2000). Furthermore,

the powerful institutions within society are seen to do the work of 'institutionalising'

dominant versions of childhood and in this process construct the relationships

between teachers and children.

An understanding of childhood as socially constructed opens up the possibilities for

change. As we consider the different versions of childhood that have been, or are

enacted in a wider sphere than our own, this creates space to consider alternatives and

make more informed choices. As Cannella (1997) argues:

> We have choices to make about who we think the child is and these choices have
>
> enormous significance…these choices determine the institutions we provide for
>
> children and also define the pedagogical work that adults and children do in these
>
> institutions (p.43).

Studying language and teacher identities

In order to explore the ways a group of novice teachers view their work with children,

this paper presents data drawn from interviews with a cohort of sixty student teachers

in the fourth year of their teacher education degree and also from a second interview towards the end of their first year of teaching. As stated previously, these interviews were part of a larger study investigating the relationship between the teacher education curriculum and teacher identities. This paper focuses on two of the teachers from the larger cohort of students. The two teachers discussed in this paper were working in very different contexts. Both were working with 4 and 5 year old children. Sally drew from her teaching experience in a suburban school in a low socioeconomic area of an Australian capital city. Nat talks about her work in one of the schools in a large township in the far North West of Australia with a high percentage of Indigenous children.

As these two novice teachers re-tell their experience of learning in the university context and their experiences of teaching and learning in centres and schools, they are building professional identities as early childhood educators. As they put the 'I' into their discussions, they take up particular stances in relation to ideas, events and 'others'. In order to examine this process more closely I required a unique set of analytical tools. The analytical tools made available in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) opened up new ways of examining the relationship between language and the development of teacher identities for CDA is a methodology that integrates the study of language with a consideration of wider social practices. CDA begins with the recognition that language and discourse are not neutral but both construct and are constructed by the social, political, and economic contexts in which they are situated. CDA is a multidisciplinary approach that analyses both the form and the function of language or, to use Rogers' (2004) words, 'the *hard* and *soft* structures of language' (p.8 italics added). The hard structures include aspects of the linguistic system such as

adjectives, nouns, and verbs. Soft structures include the function of language … and are called soft structures because of the 'level of abstraction' required for conceptualising the ways language is being used (p.8). My task as an analyst involved 'describing, interpreting, and explaining' the relationship between these structures in the process of developing a better understanding of what language does and how it accomplishes the things it does. I drew from Halliday (1985), Gee (1992; 1996; 1999) and Fairclough's (2003) frameworks to study how the lexical and grammatical features of language worked together to achieve particular functions in the interviews.

Focusing on the linguistic resources the speakers used, enabled me to do what Simon (in Britzman, 1994) refers to as 'paying attention to the 'social imaginary', the way of naming, ordering and representing' the social reality of early childhood teaching. This attention to language helped me to analyse how the effects of this naming and representing both created and constrained a set of options for action in the world of early childhood education.

The concept of teachers as one part of what is known as a Standard Relational Pair (SRP) is particularly useful for understanding and examining how the relationship between teachers and children is established and maintained (Eglin & Hester,1992, p.244). Eglin & Hester describe SRP as a 'paired set of categories such that to mention one pair partner is to have the other 'programmatically' present'. For example, one cannot be categorised as a 'sister' unless one has at least one sibling. One cannot be categorised as a 'teacher', unless there is a 'student' or 'learner'. Jayyusi's (1984) exploration of the 'asymmetric' accounts of relational pairs is

particularly relevant to my analysis for it makes explicit how children and adults are positioned in very different ways within the 'paired' teacher/child category. The adult is positioned as the complete part of the pair and the child is positioned as incomplete and 'becoming'.

Talking about children

In the larger study many of the novice teachers positioned themselves in relationship to children. Throughout the interviews they used language to sustain and create difference between social groups by assigning labels to these groups such as 'child, student and teacher'. The 'child' category was one of the most taken for granted groupings that was employed in the interviews. It is not surprising that this category was assumed to need no further analysis or exploration in the majority of the talk. The idea of childhood is so hegemonic that 'society can be described as comprising those who are children and those who are not' (Austin, Dwyer, & Freebody, 2003). Most people working in early childhood take the category 'child' as an unproblematic fact of life.

In order to interrogate how the category 'child' was employed by novice early childhood educators in the larger study, my first analytic strategy used the data from interviews with all participants. I extracted a *sample* of phrases that included the words 'child/children or kids'. Examples of phrases that include the words 'kids' and 'children' are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: References to children

Kids	Children
…get work samples of the kid's work	A lot of people dropped out because we weren't with children
…what we do to take the kids to the next level	…it (K-7) showed us how it (Curriculum Framework) was beneficial to the children
…we just saw kids for 20 mins in the whole semester	…the lives of these children
…so my attitude towards these little kids	… this one child…
…we hadn't been near younger kids	…working with the children
… you lose the kid	…when you're positive with children
…we didn't get to see any kids	…this child low…not very intelligent
…the kids play up and you fail	…even the children who can't…
… looking at the kid	…we are still dealing with younger children

The use of the words 'kids' and 'children' create different pictures of teacher/child relationships. The linguistic patterns that are associated with the word 'kids' seem to create an informal, personal relationship between teacher and child, for example 'we didn't get to see any kids'. The word 'kid' is nearly always prefaced with a verb indicating a teacher action. The verbs include 'get, take, saw, lose and see'. In contrast, the words 'child' or 'student' are used in ways that construct a more formal, institutionalised relationship and identity for both teacher and child. The word 'children' is often used in phrases such as 'these children', 'this child', 'the children' and refer to a child as a member of a category. The individual child is constructed as

part of a nominalised category called 'childhood'. The child as a social actor is not visible in this type of pattern.

As a way of continuing my investigation, I then looked more closely at longer excerpts from the interview data from sections of the interviews involving two novice teachers, Nat and Sally. I looked for patterns, gaps and inconsistencies in the data as a way of better understanding how these two speakers viewed their relationship with children. My initial reading of the data led me to the realisation that Nat and Sally often drew from concepts of the 'normal' child, as described within a developmental framework to organise their thinking about children and more particularly about children who were 'different'.

Unbelievable children and families

In discussing their experience of teaching Sally and Nat discuss children and families who did not 'fit' their ideas of what 'should be'. In the following extract, Sally is discussing her teaching in an early childhood classroom:

> *Yeah and I've actually used some of that with my pre-primary who are ... because especially the ones that are ... there are a couple that have been diagnosed with ADHD would you believe it? At five or six years old and another couple who are very, very active and aggressive little people and we do ... have started doing some visualisation and relaxation stuff and these people fall asleep which is fantastic and they ... I ask them to draw their pictures or talk about you know their journey when they've been relaxing and we're seeing some different little people ...*

9

Sally leaves two of her sentences unfinished when she is describing some of the young children with whom she has worked and it seems as if she is struggling to find appropriate words. She states that 'there are a couple (of children) who have been diagnosed with ADHD'. She then 'constructs' dialogue by asking a rhetorical question: 'would you believe it?' This question adds to a sense of 'unbelievable' children, and she then goes on to add that these children are five or six. What is unbelievable here? Is it surprising that the children are so young or is it that they have been diagnosed with ADHD or is it the combination of both those characteristics that creates surprise?

Sally is drawing from a discourse of normality for organising her thinking about the children and the limits of a normal childhood become evident in her next statement. She describes another two children as 'very, very active and aggressive'. The words 'very, very' work together to construct a picture of abnormality for, while it is considered appropriate for young children to be active, by adding the words 'very, very', Sally has introduced a comparison between these children and those she considers to be normal. Describing them as aggressive also adds to the deficit picture of the children. Sally finishes this section of her turn by describing how, when the children have drawn, talked and relaxed, they are 'different'. Sally's comment suggests that as a result of her pedagogic work, the children were changed.

Sally then broadens the topic of teachers' work to include a discussion of the type of learning experiences children were offered in the settings in which she had worked. Sally introduces the idea that a lot of learning in early childhood classrooms is

'pointless'. Here are her words:

> *Or pointless ... you get a ... like a lot of ... people have a theme in early childhood like in pre-primary or whatever so we're doing clowns today and of course clowns aren't relevant to the lives of these children today so yeah it's ... and just cutting out coloured pieces of paper and sticking them onto things I just you know there's a lot of pointless yeah that happens and it isn't related to their lives yeah...*

Sally uses repetition very effectively to create emphasis. She uses the word 'pointless' twice as she provides an example of this type of learning by referring to a theme of 'clowns' (a theme often pursued in early childhood classrooms). Throughout her mini-story she uses the phrases 'relevant to the lives of these children', 'related to their lives', 'real life context', 'their life context'. The words 'life' and 'lives' are repeated and their co-location with 'real', 'relevant' and 'related' create thematic repetitions emphasising that Sally's version of effective teaching is that it is related to children's lives. Sally then elaborates on this idea of relevance by providing an example of what she means:

> *...it occurs to me almost everyday because we've got some sad little people who've been you know punched and bitten by their parents and all sorts of nasty things happening*

Sally repeats the phrase 'nasty things' twice in this section of her discussion and these words are co-located and associated with the idea of parents 'punching' their children, and children 'being bitten' by their parents. These phrases, and explicit references to

11

parents hurting their children construct a view of some families and children as extremely different from her expectations of what 'should be'. The imagery that is created by Sally is achieved by attention to particularity. The words 'punched' and 'bitten' are particular actions, not generalised behaviours, and invoke a picture of children living in violent situations, a very deficit picture of family life.

Following Sally's creation of a scene where children are being punched and bitten by their parents she refers to my messages (as a university lecturer) about 'respecting' and 'valuing where these little people are coming from'. In this section she uses the words 'remember' and 'remind' five times:

> *…I keep reminding myself about a lot of the stuff that Susan talked about about low socioeconomic areas that she worked in and remembering that doesn't matter how some of these come across these people love their children you know even if they've done these nasty things and still remembering to respect and value where these little people are coming from and not sort of ... sometimes it's really hard because they'll say things to you and you go you know you can't then you think well hang on a minute, that's their life's context and how can I ... what good am I being to them if I start criticising that?*

These references to needing to remind herself about these ideas create a sense that they are not Sally's ideas, and she needs to 'remember back' to her university knowledge to retrieve them. What she is experiencing in her day-to-day teaching is so different to her idea of what 'should be' happening that she is finding it difficult to understand. This is not an unusual or new experience for many teachers. Tyler and

Meredyth (1993) draw from Steedman's (1986) work to make that point that:

> Working class children, as a group, have most often been judged by contemporary
> and historical commentators as so unsuccessful at being children that they have
> appeared to their observers as not 'real' children at all (p.36).

The distance between what is defined in educational psychology as 'normal' alongside the capacities and experience of many children is often so great that many teachers working in disadvantaged schools regard few of their pupils as 'ordinary' or in line with their professional discourse of how children 'ought to be'. Sally's use of the word 'children' throughout her mini-story is typical of many of the comments identified in Figure 1. As noted previously, the use of the words 'children' communicates a sense of an institutionalised child and signifies a formal relationship between teacher and child.

Juxtaposing a picture of these 'little people' (also used twice) being 'punched and bitten' at home with them 'cutting out coloured pieces of paper and sticking them onto things' to do with 'clowns' at school, creates a sense of the absurd in a conversation about 'child centred teaching'. The social and cultural distance between what is happening in school, and what is happening outside school is made explicit and dramatic in Sally's choice of words and attention to detail. Sally's description of her experience has not only constructed a picture of deficit children but has also created a sense of deficit families. Sally's story could be described as an example of class difference. Whilst Sally shares a 'white' world view with the families with whom she is working, their values and life experiences are so different from her

expectations of what 'should be' that she struggles to make sense of her work as a novice teacher.

Possessing children: 'My indigenous kids'

The discussions regarding teaching experience now move to a different time and place. When talking about her experience in her first year of teaching in the far North West of Western Australia Nat also tells a tale of 'difference':

> *Yeah, yeah. And I found that to be really interesting in my class...I actually sort of gave Carly my assistant, and said can you just look at this list today and I asked her to watch the kids, I thought oh probably be better for her to do it and it sort of helped me a lot with looking at my indigenous kids. And as opposed to my non-indigenous and just seeing ... how it works for them ... in the class and you know what ... where their interests are and what makes them stay in the place and want to learn, and stuff like that. And I didn't actually keep any of it, I kind of just spoke to Carly about it and got rid of it but I shouldn't have.*

The linguistic resources used by Nat are different to those evident in Sally's mini-story. Nat does not use the word 'children' in her recount, but she often uses 'kids'. Furthermore, she refers to them as 'my' indigenous kids. The use of the possessive 'my' is very typical of the 'ownership' of children by teachers working with racial difference. This is a theme taken up by Harper (2000) in her research regarding the ways white privilege is enacted in educational institutions. In her study of white teacher identities, Harper (2000) provides an example of how this sense of possession is perceived by parents ' The community was really upset with they found out because they are not your kids and don't you ever think they are your kids…' (p.139).

14

Possession implies a sense of power over whatever is possessed. The 'owner' reserves the right to make decisions regarding the 'owned' and this positioning leaves little choice for agency for the possessed or their families. In contrast to Sally's description of her work as a novice teacher, Nat does not mention the families with whom she is working. In fact, they are entirely absent. Her use of the word 'my' could be taken to imply that she sees herself as taking on the parent role.

Nat juxtaposes her phrase 'my indigenous kids' with the phrase 'as opposed to my non-indigenous' and her choice of linguistic resources sets up a clear line of distinction between groups of children in the class. The story Nat is telling here is one of cultural as well as class difference and the word 'opposed' strengthens a perception of division and separation. Nat's choice of pronouns, apart from her possessive 'my' also establishes social distance between herself as a white teacher and the indigenous children she is teaching. Throughout her turns she refers to the children as 'them' and 'they'. She uses generalised statements about indigenous children such as 'they don't like using flat materials all the time' and 'there were things that they don't like'. These generalisations work to create a sense that the indigenous children are a homogenous group.

The relationship between what happens at university and what happens in the first year of teaching is taken up in many parts of the interviews with Nat and Sally. In this extract, Nat re-iterates how the research she had done at university was useful in her first year of teaching:

Again that research project. Where I was just going absolutely balmy and I needed

something and I started using that and I mean and it was simply, it ... I mean there

were things that okay they didn't like ... they don't like using flat materials all the time,

they like to go over and get the 3D stuff so one day I pulled out something that had a bit

more box construction in it and it reduced the behaviour of three of my boys instantly

and I mean all of those [inaudible] strategies you can come to and bring them to your

classroom as long as you've got some really basic fundamental tools that you know will

work in any context but also ... I mean again I needed to go out and find more stuff out

about where my kids were you know and that meant going and speaking to ...

Int: I think I'm hearing from you, Nat, that you've become a reflective practitioner.

Nat: I've had to, yeah because this is lacking like what I was used to. There is nobody

in ... I mean you know aside from the reporting and stuff like that, if people were to ask

me what was similar from what happens in Perth I could honestly say nothing except

that kids turn up everyday...

Nat uses many tentative words in her description of her teaching. When she is

describing how she used her teacher assistant to help do some research with the

indigenous children in her class, she uses phrases including 'I actually sort of', 'I

thought oh probably' and 'sort of' many times in her discussion. These modality

features establish a sense of hesitancy about her work. This hesitancy or uncertainty is

not uncommon when teachers are involved in making difficult pedagogical decisions.

As MacNaughton (2005) points out, the complexity of teachers' decision-making is

given little attention in research about teachers and teaching, but rather 'the

technocratic view of teacher decision-making and innovation dominates a majority of

mainstream early childhood literature' (p.18). Nat's comments do not imply a

16

simplistic, technocratic view of teaching.

Nat's choice of words when she says 'she was going balmy' in her first year of
teaching creates a dramatic picture of a young teacher struggling with the complexity
of her work. She says she 'needed something' to help her deal with the 'difference'
she is encountering. The only thing that Nat says is similar to other teaching she has
done is 'that the kids turn up every day'.

Normalcy: Constructing some children as 'other'

What are the versions of the 'child' enacted in the interviews? It seems that the
children described by Sally and Nat do not fit their ideas of what constitutes
normality. This concept of 'normality' requires further elaboration. Fendler (2001)
argues that, over time, there has been a 'crucial historical shift' in the meaning of the
concept. Fendler points out that the idea of 'normality was originally conceived in
medical contexts but later transferred to the social sciences' (p.125). Although
'pathological' has always been defined in opposition to healthy, Fendler maintains
that prior to the early 19th century, pathology was the central and specified term and
healthy was the general or default position' (p.126). This meant that the pathological
condition was clearly defined and described, and anything that did not fit this
definition was considered 'normal'. This also meant that the possibilities for being
normal were much broader than now, where normality has clearly defined
specifications and whatever does not fit these specifications is defined as pathological
(p.127). In an educational context, what this means is that the 'possibilities' for

17

children to be considered 'abnormal' or 'pathological' are much more prolific than ever before. As Fendler contends:

> Normalisation operates through the discourse of developmentality when the generalisations that stipulate normal development are held to be defined and desirable, and all departures from that circumscribed stipulation are held to be not-normal or deviant. The generalization serves-more or less explicitly - as the norm, and the lives of individual children are evaluated with reference to that norm (p.128).

The children in Nat and Sally's stories are evaluated by reference to what is considered normal and in this process are constructed as 'other'. Nat tells a story of cultural difference related to race and class. From her white, adult, gendered, anglo perspective it is difficult for Nat to conceive how school must be for the indigenous children in her class. Whilst Sally shares 'whiteness' with the children and families with whom she is working, Sally's struggles are also about cultural difference related to class. The difficulties experienced by both Nat and Sally in working with this difference is not surprising for, despite many calls from researchers working toward educational reform for more heterogeneous views of children than offered within a developmental framework, Western child development ideology has continued to maintain hegemony in most educational institutions. As Soto and Swadener (2002) assert, in the early childhood discourse of child development 'Issues of power, issues of language and culture are rarely discussed and when they are included, children and families are essentialised and categorised' (p. 56). As Nat and Sally discuss issues of culture, they struggle with difference in ways that assign some children to categories of deficit.

18

Novice teachers finding a voice

Nat's hesitancy and tentativeness when she talks about her experience of teaching in her first year of paid employment are constructing a picture of difficult pedagogical decision-making and presents evidence of her struggle to work with 'different' young children and find her 'own voice' in the process. Sally is also unsure about how to reconcile her experience of teaching with the 'authoritative' voice that she remembers from her university experience. Britzman (1994) suggests that the struggle for voice begins in a dialogical relation between the 'authoritative' version of what teachers should be and do, and our own 'internally persuasive' discourse. Britzman also suggests that the internal discourse is 'tentative, suggesting something about our subjectivity and something about the subjectivities and conditions one confronts' (p.62). Nat is tentative in her attempts to find her own thoughts and voice in the context of her first year of teaching. Sally is more definite but is also struggling with making her teaching meaningful.

The analysis of these interview comments provides evidence that in many educational contexts a developmental discourse is dominant and that any discussion of difference nearly always involves a discussion of deficit and inequity. One of the ways these novice teachers respond to difference is to construct teaching as a way of rescuing or changing the children who do not fit within the normative maps of child development.

Teaching as a rescue operation

The idea that education is a process of 'improving' or making 'better' children has a

long history that gained considerable momentum when 'compensatory education'

became informed by educational psychology and developed new forms of regulation

to break into 'the cycle of poverty' (Rose, 1989). Early childhood education is often

constructed as a rescue operation, particularly rescuing young children from the

influences of poverty and 'inappropriate' family circumstances. Sally sees rescuing

children from their abnormal levels of 'activity' and 'aggression' as an important

aspect of her work. Nat sees rescuing children as taking possession and replacing their

parents. Both Sally and Nat's responses to their situations are not surprising in the

current educational context where the diagnosis of children's 'special needs' has

become a major feature of educational practice.

Baker's (1998) analysis of how the concept of education as a rescue operation has

changed over time provides useful intellectual tools for thinking about Sally's and

Nat's comments. Baker suggests that:

> Categories of deficit owe less to nature and more to culturally specific practices. These
>
> practices privilege concepts of intelligence, orderliness, rationality, self-control, speed
>
> of recall, willingness to submit to authority, a love of reading, writing and colouring, a
>
> willingness to sit still, and formal English proficiency (p.138).

Sally's comments draw from such 'culturally specific practices', particularly her

comment about the activity levels of some children. As I have previously noted,

activity is traditionally seen as important for children's development but it seems that

these children exceed the normal levels of activity and this deviance has constructed a

problem. The children in Sally's mini-story have been labelled, categorised and

'treated' as deficit. The children in Nat's story have been labelled as indigenous first

and foremost. Baker argues that 'categories of deficit' are disproportionately filled with children who are poor, and racially 'different' from the dominant culture. While these categories are used for identifying and helping children, they also are repressive in that they construct 'the not quite ideal child', a child who needs to be rescued.

Analysing the language used in the interviews has enabled us to catch a glimpse of some novice teachers making sense of the 'hidden work of learning to teach' which Britzman (1994) describes as a complex, multifaceted process in which newly appointed teachers quickly learn the difference between being 'assigned a role' and negotiating a way of personally taking up that role (constructing a teacher identity). Drawing further from Britzman's ideas, my analysis of the talk in the interviews has demonstrated a playing out of the 'constant and tricky social negotiation' involved in this process of finding their own voice amid the conditions in which novice teachers find themselves. The analysis has opened up some new spaces to look at this process. Becoming a good teacher is not simply a matter of following a prescribed path to an already defined and finished concept of the 'good teacher'. A multiplicity of discourses about what it means to teach become evident throughout the interviews and there is often dissonance and contestation within and between the discourses the speakers 'hook into' as they discuss their experience as novice teachers.

Different versions of 'good teaching' are articulated in Sally and Nat's comments. For example, ways of working with the cultural differences of class and race are taken up, articulated and interpreted in very different ways. Nat's story of racial difference and Sally's story of class difference contribute to a picture of very individual

21

interpretations of what it means to be a teacher working with young children. The stories make real the ways issues of equity and diversity are played out in teachers' work and revisit the complexity of decision-making in the current context where ideas of 'normality' dominate.

Conclusion

There is evidence of a struggle as these novice teachers sort out their thinking about their work with children: a struggle between the authorised versions of what it means to be a good teacher and personal interpretations and imagining of what these versions mean in different situations. The analysis of the interview data provides evidence that in contemporary early childhood education there are some versions of childhood that are more prevalent and dominant than others. It is evident that there is still much work to do in teacher education to destabilise the dominance of the discourse of normativity that is embedded in child development theory. Somehow, the experience of teacher education needs to offer more positive, meaningful opportunities to engage with difference. As Lisa Delpit (1995) contends:

> We must all find some way to come to terms with these two issues (power and 'otherness'). When we teach across the boundaries of race, class, or gender - indeed when we teach at all - we must recognize and overcome the power differential, the stereotypes, and the other barriers, which prevent us from seeing each other…Until we can see the world as others see it, all the educational reforms in the world will come to naught (p.134).

Although at times these novice teachers refer to children in more heterogeneous ways, the dominant pattern that became evident in their comments is one of relationships

between children and adults where the teacher assumes power and control. I argue

that this is not unusual and as Britzman (1994) says, if we are ever to alter this

situation then 'teacher education must uncouple the imperatives of social control from

the teacher's identity' (p.71). This uncoupling requires a repositioning of children in

the educative process and a challenging of legitimised, unequal power relationships

between children and adults. Taking up this challenge offers new and exciting identity

positions for early childhood teacher educators, early childhood teachers and the

young children with whom we work.

REFERENCES

Austin, H., Dwyer, B., & Freebody, P. (2003). *Schooling the child: The making of students in classrooms*. New York: Routledge Farmer.

Baker, B. (1998). 'Childhood' in the emergence and spread of U.S. public schools. In S. Popkewitz & M. Brennan (Eds.) *Foucault's challenge: Discourse, knowledge and power in education.* New York: Teachers College Press. pp.117-141.

Baker, B. (1999). The dangerous and the good? Developmentalism, progress, and public Schooling. *American Educational Research Journal, 36*(Winter), 797-834.

Britzman, D. (1994). Is there a problem with knowing thyself? Toward a poststructuralist view of teacher identity. In T. Shanahan (Ed.), *Teachers thinking, Teachers knowing: Reflections on literacy and language education*

23

(pp. 53-75). Urbana: National conference on Research in English: National Council of Teachers in English.

Cannella, G. S. (1997). *Deconstructing early childhood education: Social justice and revolution*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Christensen, P., & James, A. (Eds.). (2000). *Researching with children*. London: Falmer Press.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (1999). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care*. London: Falmer Press.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children*. New York: New York Press.

Eglin, P., & Hester, S. (1992). Category, predicate and task: the pragmatics of practical action. *Semiotica, 88*(3/4), 243-268.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse.* London: Routledge.

Fendler, L., (2001). Educating flexible souls: The construction of subjectivity through developmentality and interaction. In K. Hultqvist &G. Dahlberg (Eds.) *Governing the child in the new millennium* (pp119-143). New York: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1986). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gee, J. (1992) *The social mind: Language, ideology and social practice.* NewYork: Bergin & Garvey.

Gee, J. (1996) *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses* (2nd ed.) London: Taylor & Francis.

Gee, J. (1999) *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method.* London: Routledge.

Halliday, M. (1985). *Spoken and written language.* Burwood: Deakin University Press.

Harper, H. (2000).White women teaching in the North: Problematic identity on the shores of Hudson Bay. In N. Rodriguez & L. Villaverde (Eds.) *Dismantling white privilege: Pedagogy, politics and whiteness* (pp 127-143*).* New York: Peter Lang.

Hultqvist, K., & Dahlberg, G. (Eds.). (2001). *Governing the child in the new millennium.* New York: Routledge Falmer.

James, A., & Prout, A. (Eds.). (1997). *Constructing and reconstructing childhood.* London: Falmer Press.

Jayyusi, L. (1984). *Categorisation and the moral order.* Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Mac Naughton, G. (2005). *Doing Foucault in early childhood studies: Applying poststructural ideas.* New York: Routledge.

Rose, N. (1989). *Governing the soul: The shaping of the private self.* London: Routledge.

Rogers, R. (2004). An introduction to critical discourse analysis. In R.Rogers (Ed), *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp.1-19). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Sacks, H., Scheglof, A., & Jefferson, G., (1974). A simplest systematic for the organisation of turn-taking for conversation. *Language,50(4), 696-735.*

Soto, L. D., & Swadener, B. (2002). Toward libratory early childhood theory, research and praxis: Decolonising a field. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 3*(1), 38-66.

Tyler, D., & Meredyth, D. (Eds.). (1993). *Child and citizen: Genealogies of schooling and subjectivity*. Griffith: Institute for Cultural Policy Studies Faculty of Humanities Griffith University.

26